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UNCLAS BOGOTA 010893

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOC REQUESTS U.S. FUNDING OF ILO-SPONSORED
COLOMBIA PROGRAMS

REF: BOGOTA 10447

Sensitive but unclassified. Not for Internet distribution.

Summary

1. (U) The GOC has requested that the U.S. help finance the ILO's Special Program for Colombia, outlined in reftel. The Embassy supports the program and recommends funding at least three of the four projects because they assist in the demobilization and reinsertion process, address major concerns of the labor movement, and focus on local, sustainable economic development. End Summary

GOC Joins ILO in Requesting U.S. Support

2. (U) On November 10, 2005, the GOC sent a diplomatic note requesting that the U.S. support the Special Program for Colombia whose financing was initially to be discussed at a November 14-15 international donor's conference in Geneva (copy faxed to WHA/AND). The diplomatic note followed the ILO's separate request that the U.S. support four projects, each with a pricetag of around \$1 million (reftel).

Intersection of ILO Objectives and U.S. Interests

3. (SBU) The goals of the four ILO projects coincide with U.S. objectives in Colombia; the embassy recommends that the U.S. support at least the first three projects; the fourth project is also valuable but could be somewhat duplicative of other ILO efforts. The projects are aimed at: (1) displaced and demobilized youth; (2) fundamental labor rights and collective bargaining; (3) local economic development; and (4) generating employment for women through local enterprises.

-- Employment for displaced and demobilized youth: this project supports the U.S. goal of facilitating the demobilization and reinsertion process. The project will incorporate elements of an existing program in Cochabamba, Bolivia that has successfully reintegrated youth involved in narco-trafficking. The program supports our MPP objective of dismantling criminal organizations.

-- Strengthening social dialogue over fundamental labor rights and collective bargaining: this is an extension of the first phase of ILO's Special Program. The tripartite (government, labor, private sector) sessions organized through this project address priority issues for the Colombian labor movement, such as freedom of association. The program supports our MPP objective of promoting universal human rights standards.

-- Promote economic development at the local level: this project aims to help local authorities and business leaders to create jobs, increase productivity, and strengthen competitiveness. The project will provide training to a wide swath of local actors, including trade associations, businesses, and municipal workers. The program supports our MPP alternative development goal.

-- Generating employment for women: this project intends to increase employment opportunities for women by working with small businesses. While gender employment disparities are a significant issue in Colombia, this project overlaps to some extent with the ILO's more general local employment initiative above.

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